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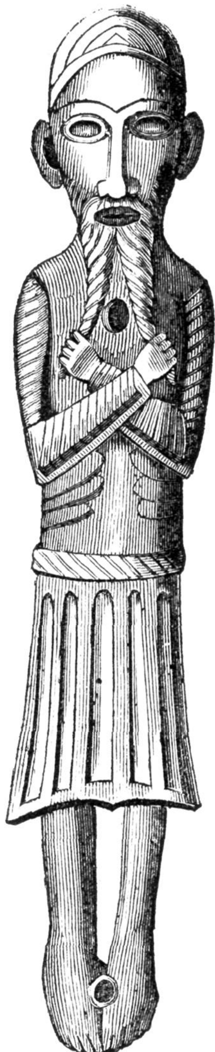
FINE ARTS.
No. 2.
Historic sketch of the past and present state of the Fine Arts in Ireland.

In our preceding paper we said that most of the bronze figures found in Ireland, and mistakenly called Idols, were unquestionably, of Christian times. This fact is proved from an ancient shrine still preserved in the county of Westmeath, which is covered over with figures of this description.

These bronze figures, are of great interest and value not only as illustrating the state of the Fine Arts in Ireland previous to the arrival of the English, but also for the light they throw on the costumes of the different classes of society in those remote times, and for which they are the most accurate authorities that can be referred to. As an example, we present our readers with a figure of a warrior, helmeted and wearing the *philibeg* or *kilt*.



From this figure, and others of the same kind, we find that the use of the *philibeg* was not confined to the Scottish highlanders, but, as might be exoected, was also common to the Irish, from whom no doubt, it was derived: and we also find how little reason or authority those antiquarians had who supposed it derived from the Romans, or the historian Pinkerton for asserting it to be of no great antiquity. That learned but dogmatic writer, asserts that, "it was always quite unknown among the Welsh and *Irish*." "That its antiquity among the Highlanders is very questionable; and some suppose it not *older than Mary's reign!*" and again, "the Highland dress is *not ancient*, but singular, and adapted to their roving life." (Vol. 2. p. 74.) The folly of such assertions will now excite a smile.

Our next figure is obviously that of an ecclesiastic, and is exceedingly curious for the richness of the ornaments on the robe. The original bronze is in the valuable museum of Irish antiquities of Mr. Maguire, to whom we are indebted for the drawing, which is now for the first time published. In our future numbers we shall occasionally

give other examples of those curious sculptures, which are, as far as we know, only to be found in our island. We now proceed with our little history :—

The introduction of Christianity commences a new era in the history of the Fine Arts in Ireland. Whether it proceeded originally from Rome, or elsewhere, is still a mystery, notwithstanding all that has been written on the subject. This, however, is an enquiry foreign to our purpose ; but we may observe, that *the bloodless conversion of a people to a new mode of faith,* gives strong evidence of their being at the time, far removed from utter barbarism. The oldest accounts of the progress of Patrick through Ireland present us with many particulars tending to that conclusion. How interesting is that passage in the collections of Tirechan, a writer of the seventh century, in which we learn, that the Saint on paying *the sum ordained by law,* was furnished by a Pagan king, who would not renounce the religion of his fathers, with a passport and an escort of twelve men, to enable him, with his little army of bishops, priests, and laymen, to traverse Ireland from one extremity to the other. This tolerant spirit, and the subsequent conversion of a nation to the Christian faith, soon drew a crowd of foreigners from the most civilized parts of the globe, to lead a life of religious peace and seclusion in the Western isle, and procured for her the epithets of " Insula Sanctorum" and " Insula Sacra." Of the great extent of this influx we have abundant testimony, particularly in the ancient litany used in Ireland, in the sixth and seventh centuries, as preserved by St. Engus, in which the holy foreigners interred in Ireland, are invoked. For example :

" Sanctos Romanos, qui jacent in Acadh Galma in Ybh Echia, invoco in auxilium meum per Jesum Christnm, &c.

" SS. Romanus de Lettir erca, invoco, &c.

" SS. Peregrinos de Cluain mhoir invoco, &c.

" SS. Duodecim Conchennacios qui cum utroque Sinchello jacent in Kill Ahcuidh, invoco, &c.

" SS. Septem monachos Ægyptios qui jacent in Disert Uledh, invoco, &c.

" SS. Centum quinquaginta Peregrinos Romanos et Italos, qui comitati sunt S. Abbanum in Hiberniam, invoco, &c.

" SS. Gallos de Salliduic, invoco, &c.

" SS. Saxones (i. e. Anglos) de Rigair, invoco, &c.

" Quinquaginta Monachos de Brittania socios filii Mainani in Glenloire, invoco, &c.

" SS. 510, qui ex partibus transmarinis venerunt cum S. Boethio Episcopo, invoco, &c.

with many more enumerated in that curious little book.

In this litany we find no mention of Greeks, a circumstance which may be attributed to the differences between the Greek and Roman churches in those ages, and the triumph of the latter in Ireland after the preaching of St. Patrick ; but we have abundant evidence, elsewhere, that many came into Ireland, and that the Irish, who probably received their first knowledge of Christianity from the East, were not unacquainted with Greek literature.

It is to these circumstances that we are to attribute the subsequent celebrity of Ireland for piety and learning, when the Continent of Europe became involved in almost total darkness, and that the Western island was enabled to send forth to the benighted regions, what Gibbon calls, perhaps justly, a feeble ray of science and superstition, but strong enough, however, to endure and to illuminate, and ultimately to kindle into a blaze, that lighted up all Europe.

The Arts thus propagated in Ireland were corrupt and debased, but they had still a touch of the Greek and Roman glory. They were circumscribed too, in their influence, for the clergy were their sole depositories, who employed them, perhaps exclusively, to the service of their religion. The building and decorating of churches and other religious edifices, the illuminating of religious books, the carving of tombs and crosses, and above all, the manufacture in brass and other metals of shrines, crosses, croziers, and other sacred utensils—such were the chief objects on which the arts were employed, and to what other purposes in those ages could we expect them to have been applied ?

Till this period, the Irish were apparently unacquainted with the use of lime cement in building, together with the arch, the column, and other architectural ornaments ; and in their earliest churches, which are characterised by an uniformity of plan of extreme simplicity, these novelties were very sparingly employed. Those edifices were of an oblong form, with a smaller oblong branching form it towards the East, and connected with the former by a choir arch, *Arcus triumphalis* ; this arch, as well as the door way entering from the West, were frequently ornamented with pilasters or three quarter columns and ornamented mouldings, and the chief, or sometimes only light which the building received was from small open apertures or windows in the East end, or sanctuary, in which the altar was placed : the use of glass in windows was not generally used till some centuries later. Simple as was this plan, it was not inconsistent with the suggestions of good taste, or unmarked by the characteristics of propriety and fitness, and the model appears to have been derived from the most ancient models of the East. Occasionally, however, the churches exhibited a greater variety in their form, as well as richness in their decorations, as appears from, the description of St. Bridgid's church at Kildare, by Cogitosus. To this period also belong the ecclesiastical round towers, the origin and uses of which have been so great a puzzle to antiquarians.

The Sculptor's labor in those early ages was chiefly employed on the stone crosses, erected for various purposes in the vicinity of the churches, or the capitals of columns and other architectural ornaments : statues, properly so called, were not generally introduced for some centuries later, the prejudices of the people being opposed to them. Monumental effigies earlier than the twelfth century are not found in Ireland, and appear to have been introduced by the Anglo Normans ; the ancient Irish tombs present only ornamented crosses. The stone crosses have little variety in their general form, but are frequently rich and elaborate in ornament, or loaded with scriptural subjects in bas relief ; the latter though rude in design, often exhibit an acquaintance with classical forms and costumes, and such an agreement in style with the Greek and Roman sculptures of the same ages, as leaves little doubt of their being the work of foreign hands. The same remark may be applied to the croziers, shrines, and other works of the carvers and workers in metal, many of which are still preserved in the cabinets of the curious : Assicus, bishop of Elphin, the worker in metals for St. Patrick, betrays apparently in his name a Roman origin. Many of those interesting relics exhibit such an extraordinary acquaintance with the art of jewellery, as would excite admiration in the mind of a skilful artist of the present day. They are usually carved with great delicacy, inlaid with gold and silver, enamelled, and ornamented with precious stones of foreign production.

The works of the painter are generally less enduring than those of the sculptor or architect, and but small vestiges of their skill in those times, have descended to us. Cogitosus, a writer of the 7th century, speaks of the painted pictures (ac decorata *pictis tabulis*) which decorated the Church of St. Bridgid, at Kildare, and but for that notice we should now, perhaps, be ignorant that the art was thus employed at so early a period. The most ancient remains of frescos, to be found at present, are those in the choir of Cormac's Chapel, at Cashel : they are merely ornamental in their design, but exhibit still a great richness in their colours. Such examples, however, it is probable were always rare ; the chief purpose for which the skill of the painter was required being the illumination of religious books. Giraldus Cambrensis speaks in terms of astonishment and admiration of the copy of the four gospels, which we saw at Kildare, and which in the fashion of those days, was supposed to have been dictated by an angel to a scribe, in the presence of St. Bridgid, and for her use. After dilating on the variety in the designs, the delicacy of the execution, and the richness of the colouring, in the embellishments of this book, he adds, that they appeared rather to be the work of an angel, than of a man : (" ut vere hæc omnia angelicâ potius quam humanâ diligentiâ jam asseveraveris esse composita. Hæc equidum quanto frequentius et diligentius intueor, semper quasi novis obstupeo, semperque magis ac magis admiranda conspicio ; nec Appelles ipse similia efficere possit, et manu potius non mortali efformatæ, ac depictæ viderentur.") St. Bridgid's book unfortunately is no longer to be found ; but we have some works of nearly the same age

from which we may learn the character of art which had been deemed worthy of such enthusiastic approbation. In the copy of the four gospels, written by St. Columbkille. still preserved in the College library, there are two or three pictures, which have an elaborate minuteness, and a certain Byzantine richness, that might well excite the wonder and admiration of a rude age.

We have thus traced with a rapid, but not careless hand the first dawings of the Fine Arts in Ireland. The subject is an interesting one, and capable of much curious illustration, but which the nature of our Journal prohibits our indulging in. Their subsequent progress, from the 8th to the 12th century, may be noticed in a few words. Whatever change they underwent was for the worse. The country, overrun by the Danes, a barbarous and unlettered race, became an arena of rapine and of blood; and while the people were so long engaged in perpetual warfare, that they acquired the ferocity and lawless habits of their invaders, they necessarily ceased to practice, if they did not wholly forget, whatever they had previously learned of the arts of peace.

Thus far we have treated of the condition of the Fine Arts in the remoter periods of antiquity, and vindicated, we trust successfully, the early character of our country, from the aspersions which have been causelessly and ignorantly cast upon it. The remaining portion of our task, to which we shall return with pleasure and alacrity, will, doubtless, prove more deeply interesting to the general reader, as it will no longer be exclusively conversant about antiquarian remains, among which, however, we ourselves may delight to linger, we are well aware we cannot be so sure of carrying our reader's sympathies along with us, unless indeed in the investigation of an important national question, his patriotism may happily lend strength to his patience. P.

THE COUSINS.

Two brothers of the name of Sullivan, some years previous to the time at which our story commences, had quitted the North of Ireland to reside in the South. They were skilful, honest, and industrious; and the work of their hands naturally prospered. After the lapse of a few years they were universally looked upon as among the most substantial yeomen of the country, and were respected alike by rich and poor. Cornelius, the younger of the two, had established a bleach green, on the banks of the stream that turned the elder brother's mill. The bleacher's dwelling stood—always neatly white-washed, and surrounded by wild roses—at the bottom of a little dell, through which the clear water murmured and sparkled on its course; while the cottage of the miller was built by the mill-side. Corney had been blessed with only one child; and, without the aid of poetic imagination in any way, she might truly be pronounced a most interesting if not a beautiful girl; her childhood had been one of delicacy and suffering—and if the almost blighted bud did at last blossom, it still seemed unable to bear the cold breath of winter, or the scorching heat of summer; but Mary's kind parents shielded her alike from both, and she increased in loveliness and innocence beneath their roof, even as her own water lilies were shaded and nourished by the moist and fostering bank on which they grew.

Mary's father, though an honest, industrious man, had no very exalted ideas of the necessity of giving a female EDUCATION, and therefore saw no defect in his daughter, who was, to use his own phrase "as clean-skinned—as right-handed—as honest, and as pretty a woman, as you'd see in the country side." Had it not been for the miller's son, her cousin Alick, I really think she never would have learned even to read; but Alick proved himself the very model of a tutor. The boy would sit, hour after hour, pointing with a crow-quill to the half-legible words and letters of "the read-a-made-easy,"—coaxing, explaining, entreating—but never even reproving his gentle little pupil. It was, however, astonishing how rapidly Mary improved when she could once fairly get through a book; she soon became teacher in her turn—would read aloud the Seven Champions, and the adventures of the robber Freney with so much effect, when only thirteen, that Alick, who was three years older, absolutely began to deliberate whether he, in his own proper person, would become eight champion or Freney the second.

Alick had only one brother—an elder but not a wiser youth; for poor Walter—or, as he was usually called Watty—was considered so devoid of intellect as to be unable to render assistance to his father in any way; he was impatient of control, idle and restless; but shrewd withal, and often keen of speech—sometimes as just as severe in his remarks; scrupulously honest, and full of truth; he loved wandering, and submitted to the restraint of a moderate quantity of clothes with evident reluctance; had a deep, melodious voice, and in early boyhood, a deadly hatred to his brother—changed, however, by a simple circumstance into as strong an affection. The two youths were passing through a distant village where Alick had been sent to transact some business for his father; strange boys gathered round and mocked at Walter, who, with a wreath of scarlet poppies in his black and flowing curls, presented to their unholy feelings a fit subject for mirthful scorn; the colour deepened on the cheek of the insulted lad, but, before he could retaliate, Alick turned on the tormentors, and wielded a shillela with so much spirit that they fled in all directions; one, however—a cowardly, ill-conditioned fellow—suddenly turned, and directing a stone at the hero, felled him to the earth; in another moment Walter was bending over his brother, uttering the most piercing shrieks, and wringing his hands in bitter agony; the effects of the blow were merely stunning, but the afflicted youth never forgot Alick's interference on his behalf; he became troublesomely officious and affectionate, and would weep like an infant if reproved by him, or prevented from following wherever he went.

Alick and Mary were, from the circumstances of their birth and education, attached to each other with all that kind and cordial affection which can subsist between two delicate and sensitive minds. But there was another individual who never dreamed that Mary's heart was not her own, and who imagined that *his* claims would at once receive unquestioned submission. This was Stephen Cormac, the nephew of the parish priest. His character will be best appreciated by his conduct.

Mary and her cousin Jessie Armstrong, a good-humoured, thoughtless girl, who had been at a boarding school in Dublin, and of course knew "the fashions," strolled out one fine evening to take a walk, and—either by accident or otherwise—Alick joined them. This was not unobserved by Stephen Cormac, who happened to be in the neighbourhood; and he followed, at some little distance, though he did not seem in a particularly happy mood, for he swung his stick from side to side, and most industriously decapitated every plant and little shrub within his reach. As he passed under the branches of a lofty oak, and raised his arm for the purpose of destroying some scores of juvenile acorns that clustered above his head, his weapon of destruction was wrested from his hands, and, at the same moment, a wild and singular figure dropt from the branches. The man of the oak might have served as the model of Hercules; he had on neither shoes nor stockings, and his pantaloons hardly descended below his knees; a short, tight jacket was girded round his waist by a broad belt of untanned leather; his shirt collar was thrown open, displaying a brown but superbly-moulded throat, on which a fine head was well and firmly set; he wore no hat, but his hair was bound with a scarlet handkerchief, that, tied at the side in a large knot, added to his picturesque appearance. Though there was much of wildness there was no indication of poverty about this wayward being; and as he laughed and bowed in mimic humility to the priest's nephew, a good deal of keen satiric humour played around his well-formed mouth, and danced in his large brown eyes, which in general were painfully lustreless to look upon. "And had ye no better amusement this fine summer evening, Mister Stephen,"—he said at last, after many extraordinary contortions, and having deliberately broken the thick stick with his fingers, as if it were merely a hazel twig—"Had ye no better amusement than *mooking* about like an ill-contrived spirit, smashing and killing the sweet flowers, that the moonbeams kiss and the merry bees breakfast on? And then